



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

On the Causes which determine the Choice of an Employment; being an Addition to the Essays on the Influence of Employments upon Health.

By WILLIAM AUGUSTUS GUY, M.B. Cantab., &c. &c.

IN the course of a discussion which arose out of one of my former essays on the "Influence of Employments upon Health," as well as on one or two other occasions, it has been objected to one of the leading probabilities which I sought to establish, that parents who were conscious that their children were weak or ailing, would naturally make choice of occupations requiring little exertion, such as those of the clerk, tailor, or compositor; that these trades would in this way become filled with persons naturally unhealthy, and prone to the diseases unjustly ascribed to the occupation itself; and that this is the true explanation of the unhealthiness of such employments. Though I was not disposed to attach much importance to this objection, it appeared to me to be very desirable to submit it to the test of observation, by which alone the value of such opinions can be correctly ascertained. Accordingly I again availed myself of my position at the King's College Hospital, to collect the facts necessary for the solution of this question. After ascertaining from each patient, as usual, what his occupation was, I proceeded to question him as to the reasons which had influenced his parents or himself in the choice of it, taking care so to shape my inquiries as to avoid as much as possible leading questions. The results are embodied in the following table, in which I have adopted the simple division into sedentary employments, those carried on in-doors with a greater amount of exertion, and out-door employments.

Reasons assigned.	In-door.		Out-door.	Total.
	Sedentary.	Not Sedentary.		
Father in the trade	66	69	37	172
Brother or other relation in the trade	19	13	5	37
Father or other relation in a similar trade	3	18	3	24
Prevalent trade in place of birth .....	....	2	....	2
Friendship of employer.....	1	1	....	2
Began as errand boy.....	3	7	5	15
Apprenticed by parish	12	2	....	14
" without reason assigned	15	16	....	31
An opening	14	20	10	44
No reason assigned, except a taste for the business.....	53	63	11	127
Previously in army or navy	2	3	6	11
" a servant .....	....	2	7	9
" an agricultural labourer .....	....	....	1	1
Failed in business .....	....	....	1	1
Fond of reading	2*	....	....	2
Cripples.....	5	....	....	5
Want of strength	3	....	....	3
As being more healthy, but not on account of weakness .....	....	....	1	1
As being strong and suited to the business .....	....	1	....	1
Changed from a sedentary to an out-door employment, as being more healthy.....	....	....	1	1

* Compositors.

As will naturally be anticipated, there were a few cases in which mixed reasons were assigned for the choice of an employment. Thus, a man following the employment of a compositor stated that his father was in the same trade, but that being crippled in childhood and fond of reading, he felt that it was in every respect best suited to him. This man was one of the five entered in the table as cripples.

If we analyse the foregoing table, we shall see that it gives little force to the objection to which allusion has been made, for in more than one-third of the cases (172 in 503) the child follows the father's occupation, and in little less than half the cases (233 in 503) either the same trade, or a branch of the same trade in which the father or some near relative is already engaged. A simple preference seems to have decided a fourth of the men in the choice of their employment, and a very large proportion of the remainder have become what they are for reasons over which they could have exercised but little control. Out of the total number of 503, there are only 11 who were influenced in the choice of their employment by considerations connected with health or strength, and one of these embraced an out-door occupation on the general principle of its being more wholesome, and not because he was himself unfitted by weakness or infirmity for any but a sedentary employment. It would appear, then, that 49 out of 50 men embrace, or are made to follow, their employments from motives altogether unconnected with the state of their health; and that in only 1 case in 50 does the state of health exercise any influence on the selection.

The objection, therefore, to which a reference has been made, must be allowed to have a very slender foundation, and a very slight influence upon our conclusions, especially when it is considered that in these 10 cases 5 cripples are comprised, who as being cripples are not necessarily more subject to disease than those who enjoy the full use of their limbs.

But in destroying the force of one objection to the inference that the high mortality attending sedentary occupations is due to the nature of those occupations, and the unwholesome circumstances in which they are carried on, a new difficulty has been created, and a new objection of which it is perhaps impossible to measure the force or value, namely, that in more than one-third of the cases the child follows the employment of the father, and if the occupation be an unhealthy one is heir not merely to an unwholesome employment, but to the constitutional weakness or disease which that employment has entailed upon his parent. Here, then, a new inquiry opens to the view which is not quite so simple as its predecessor, and for which the materials are not so easily procured. It is one as full of interest as of difficulty, and highly important in its bearing on the subject of the influence of employments upon health.

There is one fact revealed by this short inquiry which is not unworthy of note. In some countries it is part of a system of despotic rule that the child should follow, as a matter of course, the employment of his father and ancestors, so that his trade is to the full as hereditary as his name. Now it is a curious illustration of the force of circumstances and necessity which in our own free country has taken the place of the despotic will of the ruler, and the uncontrolled

power of custom, that more than a third of our people should fall into the very position to which these irresistible causes would elsewhere consign them. It is true that the parallel does not hold in every respect, for it extends only from father to child; but I have met with several cases in which the successive generations, as far back as they could be traced, have belonged to the same trade; and this would happen much more frequently if the number of employments in this country were as small as in the nations among whom this hereditary law or custom obtains. It would not be an unprofitable employment to trace this parallel into all the parts of our complicated commercial and manufacturing system, and to show how vast an influence circumstances over which they have no control exercise over the destiny of our labouring classes; placing those who enjoy the great blessing of legal freedom in bonds almost as hard to break as those which bind the limbs of the slave.

Incendiarism.

THE Commitments for the Incendary Offences, now happily suppressed, which prevailed towards the end of 1843, and at the commencement of 1844, are chiefly included in the tables of the past year. The recurrence of this offence after a lapse of 13 years, the particular localities to which it was principally confined, and its atrocious character, give an interest to any particulars which throw light upon the condition of those charged with its commission; and have induced a separate calculation of their age, state of instruction, and sex.

	Numbers Committed.			Centesimal Proportion.
	Males.	Females.	Total.	
Aged under 10 years.....	6	0	6	2·4
„ 10 years and under 15 years.....	31	5	36	14·7
„ 15 „ 20 „.....	20	3	23	22·4
„ 20 „ 25 „.....	41	2	43	17·6
„ 25 „ 30 „.....	30	0	30	12·2
„ 30 „ 40 „.....	31	5	36	14·7
„ 40 and above.....	26	5	31	12·7
Ages not ascertained.....	7	1	8	3·3
Total.....	224	21	245	

The numbers falling under each degree of Instruction, and the proportion per cent., were as follows:—

Unable to read and write.....	68	27·8
Able to read and write imperfectly.....	142	58·0
Able to read and write well.....	25	10·2
Instruction superior to reading and writing well....	2	0·8
Instruction could not be ascertained.....	8	3·2

In these calculations, the youth of the prisoners charged with such serious offences is chiefly remarkable; nearly 40 per cent., or more than one-third the proportion on the Commitments generally, being under 20 years of age. The degrees of Instruction do not present any particular difference. The proportion of females is very small, amounting only to 9·3 per cent.; on the Commitments generally, it is 23·1 per cent.—*From Criminal Tables for 1844.*